

## Drug uniformity

Aug. 4 is deadline for comments on Food & Drug Administration's (FDA) proposal to insure that different brands of the same drug can be used interchangeably—with safety.

FDA wants these drugs to have the same "bioavailability"—that is, they should all be absorbed in the body at the same rate in order to have the same effectiveness. FDA has listed 20-25 specific drugs as having documented bioavailability problems. The agency has also added to the list additional drugs that have a potential for inequivalence.

Different brands of one drug (Digoxin) used by heart patients were found to produce different levels of activity in the blood. Too little Digoxin could be dangerous to the patient & too much could be toxic.

The proposal describes methods that drug manufacturers must use to determine the extent & speed with which a certain drug reaches the intended site of action in the body. If manufacturers fail to submit the required data, FDA could order those drugs removed from the market.

The proposals could result in savings for consumers if doctors could, with confidence, prescribe lesser-known brands of the same drug. Health, Education & Welfare Dept. (HEW) has already proposed to reduce the cost of prescription drugs in Medicaid & Medicare programs by requiring that reimbursement for drugs be limited to the lowest priced product available to drug stores—unless there is good reason to prescribe a higher priced drug [CONSUMER REGISTER: Dec. 15, 1974].

Details—*Federal Register*: June 20, page 26142. Send comments to Hearing Clerk, Food & Drug Administration, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20852.

## Mobile homes

July 27 is deadline for comments on Housing & Urban Development Dept.'s (HUD) proposal to establish Federal construction & safety standards for mobile homes. These standards would implement the National Mobile Home Construction & Safety Standards Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-383). (Present construction standards for mobile homes are voluntary.)

In developing the standards, HUD is considering (1) available construction & safety data; (2) whether new standards would meet reasonable needs of region for which mobile homes are designed; (3) effect of standards on cost of mobile homes to consumers; (4) extent to which standards help reduce deaths, injuries & property losses in mobile home accidents; & (5) improvement of quality & durability of mobile homes.

HUD's research has identified some mobile home safety & construction problems. As a result, there will be provisions for fire safety—such as flame-resistant carpeting & other interior materials, smoke detectors, safer kitchens & safer furnace & water heater compartments. There will also be requirements for highway transportation performance & other construction provisions.

[Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is proposing to regulate mobile homes sales & services. See CONSUMER REGISTER: July 1.]

Details—*Federal Register*: June 25, page 26930. Send comments to Docket R75-340, Rules Docket Clerk, Housing & Urban Development Dept., 451-7th St., SW, Washington, DC 20410.

## Travelers' information station

Aug. 18 is deadline for comments on Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) proposal to provide for a new class of radio station to operate on certain radio frequencies (530, 1606 & 1612 kHz). Stations are designed to tell travelers about road hazards, available food, gas & lodging facilities & local points of interest. Some Federal agencies have suggested the use of radio in parks & other tourist areas.

Transmitter output power would be limited to 10 watts, which should provide an effective coverage radius of about 1 mile (1.609 kilometers). Only voice operation would be permitted & no commercial advertising would be allowed.

These stations would appear just above & just below the regular AM broadcast band on all radios.

Details—*Federal Register*: June 17, page 25601. Send comments to Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, Washington, DC 20054.

## Bicycle safety

Although the deadline for this proposal is July 16, consumers may comment anytime this month. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) originally proposed an effective date of Jan. 1 for regulating bicycles that cross state lines [CONSUMER REGISTER: Aug. 1, 1974]. However, bicycle manufacturers said they could not meet the deadline, & CPSC delayed the effective date—and is now also proposing several changes in the standard. These changes—or clarifications—apply to sharp edges & parts, protrusions, control cable abrasion & brakes. CPSC expects the final regulations to take effect within 6 to 9 months.

Details—*Federal Register*: June 16, page 25480; Dec. 16, 1974, page 43557; Oct. 15, 1974, page 36864; July 16, 1974, page 26100. CONSUMER REGISTER: Jan. 1; Aug. 1, 1974. Send comments to Secretary, Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, DC 20207.

## Food stamps

July 21 is deadline for comments on Agriculture Dept.'s proposal to make sure persons who apply for Federally aided welfare programs are at the same time given an opportunity to apply for food stamps. Although many states provide this information to prospective welfare recipients, others do not—and Agriculture wants to make all eligible consumers aware of the program & its benefits.

Details—*Federal Register*: June 20, page 26042. Send comments to Jack O. Nichols, Food Stamp Division, Food & Nutrition Service, Agriculture Dept., Washington, DC 20250.

## Miles per gallon

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) & Federal Energy Administration (FEA) are jointly sponsoring 1976 model year voluntary fuel economy labeling program for cars. Purposes of the program are to reduce energy use in transportation & to make consumers aware of factors that affect fuel economy. The program implements the President's Energy Message of April 18, 1973, in which he assigned EPA responsibility for developing a program to inform consumers about the fuel economy characteristics of various cars. (FEA has since joined EPA in the program because of that agency's energy conservation responsibilities.)

EPA will test the cars & analyze the data, & FEA will handle the public education aspects of the program.

Program includes placing stickers on each car, according to a special format. Manufacturers who choose to participate in the program obligate themselves to place a sticker on every car in their product line as soon as possible after fuel economy values have been given to them by EPA. Labels will give fuel economy for both city & highway driving. In addition, car manufacturers are encouraged to make available to dealers the *Gas Mileage Guide for New Car Buyers*, along with information explaining the effects of optional equipment & other factors affecting fuel economy. Free copies of the guide can also be obtained by writing to Fuel Economy, Pueblo, CO 81009 after Oct. 1. The first edition will include vehicles certified before Sept. 1. Later editions will include cars certified after that date.

Details—*Federal Register*: June 20, page 26058. CONSUMER NEWS: Oct. 15, 1974; Oct. 1, 1974; July 15, 1974.

## Fare increase notification

Effective July 20, Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) will require trains, bus lines & truckers to publicize their requests for rate increases.

Companies that file proposed increases with ICC must also file them with state governors & regulatory agencies. (Presently these proposals have to appear only at ICC offices & at bus & train stations. For trucks, shippers must be given copies of truckers' proposed freight rate increases.)

Other highlights of ICC's rule require railroads & truckers to:

- Make available summaries, in plain English, of their increase proposals.
- Provide wider notice of the proposals through mandatory news releases to wire services & newspapers in accordance with a prescribed format.

For passenger fare increases, companies must:

- Enlarge size & number of signs posted.
- Expand application of certain notice requirements to cover intercity passenger service.
- Revise content of signs.
- Reduce number of copies an individual opposing an increase must furnish ICC—thereby removing an obstacle to opposition.

Details—*Federal Register*: June 20, page 26032.

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## For you

These forms are for you to use, if you wish, in commenting on any Federal agency proposal summarized in CONSUMER REGISTER. Of course, if you cannot get your comments on the front & back of a form, feel free to continue your comments on additional paper.

Send comment forms to addresses listed in the summaries.

CONSUMER NEWS is publishing these forms in cooperation with **Food & Drug Administration (FDA)**.

## Rate Register

### Planes

● Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) has extended until Jan. 15, 1976, the 4% fare boost for all airlines that took effect in November 1974. This fare boost was scheduled to expire June 30. CAB turned down all other carrier requests for additional increases of 5% or 6% [RATE REGISTER: May 15, June 1 & June 15].

● Member airlines of International Air Transport Association (IATA) plan to increase air-cargo rates from 5% to 8%, world-wide, subject to approvals of the governments involved. New rates would apply to North Atlantic routes on Sept. 1 & to all other routes on Oct. 1. Higher tariffs would be effective for 2 years.

### Trains

● Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) has extended through April 30, 1976, the 10% rise in freight rates that was scheduled to end June 30. This increase was granted a year ago. Since then, ICC has allowed additional increases—7% in April & 5% in June [RATE REGISTER: April 1, May 1 & May 15].

● On June 20, the nation's railroads increased their freight rates by 5% [RATE REGISTER: May 15, May 1, April 1, March 1]. The increase was scheduled to take effect June 6, but Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) said shippers were entitled to at least 15 days'

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Clip this form, fill in blanks, write your comments & mail to agency noted in CONSUMER REGISTER item.

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## Rate Register

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notice. ICC approved the request June 5. The railroads' petition for an additional 2.5% increase, scheduled to become effective Oct. 1, will be considered by ICC at a later date.

● On June 24, **Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC)** removed exemptions from the 7% freight rate increases that took effect April 27. The exemptions applied to certain depressed industries, but ICC said railroads were a depressed industry, too. Only materials used for recycling remain exempt from the 7% increase. Even those materials are not exempt from the additional 5% increase that went into effect June 20 [RATE REGISTER: this issue].

## Buses

● On May 29, **Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC)** permitted interstate bus companies to raise fares by 10%. National Bus Traffic Association asked ICC to grant the increase in passenger fares & express package rates, & the increases went into effect May 30. This increase is in addition to the 8% increase of Dec. 23, 1974 [RATE REGISTER: Jan. 1 & 15]. Both increases are still under investigation. Consumers may comment on this latest increase by writing to Robert Oswald, Secretary, **Interstate Commerce Commission**, Washington, DC 20423. Refer to service order 13105.1.

